



Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

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## Chapter 11: The Vision of the Kings of the South and the North

Chapter 11 recalls a prophetic vision that was completely fulfilled before the time of Christ, and yet it is also one that Jesus Himself referred to in Matthew 24 when He was preparing His disciples for events yet to come.

We noted that the preparation for this vision in Chapter 10 was during the reign of Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian, not long after the demise of the last Babylonian ruler Belshazzar, and much of what we find in Chapter 11 reminds us of the message Daneil brought to Belshazzar in Chapter 8. In fact, it even harkens back to Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Chapter 2!

The accuracy of this prophetic vision leads some commentators to question the date of its authorship! However, there is nothing in the text throughout Daniel that leads us to question its authorship or date. Were it not an accurate prophecy, why would Jesus allude to it?

### 11:1-5, The Division of the Coming Greek Empire

Three more kings will arise in Persia: This is pretty straightforward. There would be three more kings in Persia until a fourth arose. That fourth king would be powerful, rich, and will oppose to the best of his ability the powerful attacks from Greece.

There were actually four kings that arose after the time Daniel had this vision until Xerxes, the one who lead the rest against the onslaught from Greece, which would be a total of four kings. It's possible that the message refers to three kings *in addition* to the current one (Cyrus). It's also possible that one of the "kings", Smerdis of Persia, is not counted because his rule lasted less than a year, and was by all accounts a corrupt imposter and not actually considered King by his contemporaries.

It was during the reign of Xerxes that the Persian Empire attempted to wipe out the Jewish people, through the plot of Haman as recorded in the Book of Esther.

Then a mighty king shall arise: The angel told Daniel of a mighty king with great power, but his kingdom would not endure, and it would be divided after his death.

...Shall rule with great dominion and do according to his will: This was fulfilled in Alexander the Great, who certainly was a mighty king. Alexander died at 32 years of age of a fever, reportedly after a drunken party in Babylon.

There's not much more focus on Alexander, perhaps because he did nothing in particular to harm Jerusalem or the Jewish people, even though he conquered the general area.

An interesting, extra-Biblical story about this. The historian Flavius Josephus records the arrival of Alexander the Great to Jerusalem, recounting how he was shown the Book of Daniel by the high priest, whom Alexander had seen in a vision. Alexander was so impressed when he saw the high priest that he spared Jerusalem and granted it religious toleration.

Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book XI, Chapter 8:

*.... [The approaching army] thought they should have liberty to plunder the city, and torment the high priest to death... the very reverse of it happened; for Alexander, when he saw the multitude at a distance, in white garments, while the priests stood clothed with fine linen, and the high-priest in purple and scarlet clothing, with his mitre on his head having the golden plate on which the name of God was engraved, he approached by himself, and adored that name, and first saluted the high-priest.*

*The Jews also did all together, with one voice, salute Alexander, and encompass him about: whereupon the kings of Syria and the rest were surprised at what Alexander had done, and supposed him disordered in his mind.*

*...And when the book of Daniel was showed him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended; and as he was then glad, he dismissed the multitude for the present, but the next day he called them to him, and bade them ask what favors they pleased of him: whereupon the high-priest desired that they might enjoy the laws of their forefathers, and might pay no tribute on the*

*seventh year. He granted all they desired: and when they entreated him that he would permit the Jews in Babylon and Media to enjoy their own laws also, he willingly promised to do hereafter what they desired.*

Not to his posterity: Upon Alexander's death, none of his descendants succeeded him, despite Alexander leaving three possible heirs: a half-brother, Philip, who was mentally deficient; a son who was born after Alexander died; and an illegitimate son named Hercules. The half-brother and the posthumously-born son were first designated co-monarchs, each with a regent assigned to guide them. But fighting amongst the regents eventually resulted in the murder of all of the heirs!

Divided toward the four winds of heaven: After the death of all Alexander's possible heirs, four generals took control of the major regions of the Greek Empire, but none of them were "according to his (Alexander's) dominion", and certainly not his desires or plans.

The king of the South shall become strong....: One of the four generals who assumed rule over the empire of the "mighty king" Alexander would become stronger and greater than the others. This was fulfilled in Ptolemy I of Egypt, whose dominion extended to and over the Holy Land.

Ptolemy I had a son/prince named Seleucus, who rose to power and took control over the region including Syria. Shrewd and corrupt, and with a family tree to match, he became more powerful than his former ruler. The Seleucids are identified with the Kings of the North, and the Ptolemies were the Kings of the South. As you can imagine, this brought about significant friction, and the Seleucid and Ptolemaic dynasties fought each other for about 130 years. Whichever was the stronger of the two at a given time held power over the Holy Land.

### **11:6-13, Peace by Marriage (for about a minute!)**

They shall join forces....: Joined by a marriage, the kings of the North and South would be allies for a while, but like many bad marriages, promises were broken, loyalties severed, and the arrangement would not last.

The daughter of the king of the South shall go to the king of the North to make an agreement: This was specifically fulfilled in the marriage between Antiochus II (of the Seleucids) and Berenice (daughter of Ptolemy II). There was peace for a time because of this marriage, but when Ptolemy II died, so did the peace. For after Ptolemy II died, Antiochus II "put away" Berenice and took back his former wife, Laodice. But Laodice didn't trust her husband Antiochus II; so she had him poisoned. After the murder of

Antiochus II, Laodice had Berenice, her infant son, and all of her attendants killed. After this reign of jealous terror, Laodice maneuvered her son, Seleucus II to assume the throne in the region of Syria.

Who shall come with an army: The angel tells Daniel that a “branch of her roots” would come from the South (the Ptolemies) and prevail over the kings of the North (the Seleucids). This was fulfilled in Ptolemy III, who was the brother of Berenice (the “branch”). Avenging the murder of his sister, Ptolemy III invaded Syria and conquered Seleucus II. However, Ptolemy III lived four only years after humiliating Seleucus II.

His sons shall stir up strife: The Seleucids would continue to battle. Seleucus III and Antiochus III, the two sons of Seleucus II, both successful generals, conquered the region including the Holy Land which became a buffer between the kings of the South and the kings of the North. But Seleucus III ruled only a short time and was succeeded by his brother. In a furious battle, Antiochus III regained control of the Holy Land from the Ptolemies.

The king of the South shall be moved with rage... He will not prevail: This was fulfilled when Antiochus III was defeated at the battle of Raphia. Because of that loss he was forced to return reign over the Holy Land to Ptolemy IV.

### **11:14-19, The King of the North Occupies “the Glorious Land”**

The king of the North... shall certainly come at the end of some years with a great army: The angel tells Daniel that the northern dynasty would answer back and defeat the king of the South in an extended siege. This victory would give the king of the North dominion over the Glorious Land. “The Glorious Land” is literally “the land of the ornament”, a reference to the Judea, the Holy Land.

This was fulfilled when Antiochus III invaded Egypt again, gaining final control over the armies of Ptolemy V and over the Holy Land.

Many shall rise up against the king of the South: Jews living in Judea helped Antiochus III defeat Ptolemy V, as they resented the rule of the Egyptian Ptolemies more than the Syrian Seleucids. So the Jewish people of the “Glorious Land” initially *welcomed* Antiochus III as a liberator from Egyptian rule. They would later regret this support.

She shall not stand with him: This was fulfilled when Antiochus III gave his daughter Cleopatra to Ptolemy V, hoping to gain permanent influence and eventually control in

Egypt. To the great disappointment of Antiochus III, the plan did not succeed because Cleopatra wasn't faithful to her Egyptian husband at all!

This was an ancestor of the more famous, politically ambitious Cleopatra, daughter of Ptolemy XII, who lived about 100 years after the time of this Cleopatra.

He shall stumble and fall: This was fulfilled when Antiochus III turned his attention towards the areas of Asia Minor and Greece. He was helped by Hannibal, the famous general from Carthage. But a Roman General, Lucius Cornelius Scipio, defeated Antiochus in Greece. Antiochus planned to humiliate Greece but instead was humiliated himself. He returned to his former regions, needing money badly for his treasury, he resorted to pillaging a Babylonian temple, and was killed by enraged local citizens.

### **11:20-35, Antiochus IV: A Contemptible/Vile Person**

There shall arise in his place one who imposes taxes: After the inglorious end of the king of the North, his successor would raise taxes. Not a popular move! This was fulfilled in the *brief* reign of Seleucus III, the eldest son of Antiochus III. He sought to tax his dominion, including the Holy Land, to increase revenues. His plan to pillage the Jerusalem temple was set aside when his ambassador had an angelic vision of warning.

Even so, Seleucus III was assassinated, probably by his brother Antiochus IV.

In his place shall arise a contemptible person: Following the brief reign of Seleucus III, the next king would be a vile person. He would not be recognized as royalty, but would take power by "flatteries" – deceit, intrigue, bribery, and corruption.

It is here that we meet Antiochus IV. He did not come to the throne legitimately because it was strongly suspected that he murdered his older brother, the previous king. The other potential heir (the son of Seleucus III) was imprisoned in Rome.

Commentator Adam Clarke:

*"He flattered Eumenes, king of Pergamus, and Attalus his brother, and got their assistance. He flattered the Romans, and sent ambassadors to court their favour, and pay them the arrears of the tribute. He flattered the Syrians, and gained their concurrence."*

Antiochus IV ascribed to himself the title “Epiphanes”, meaning “God manifest” or “the glorious/illustrious/revealed one” (like a god). Some of his contemporaries, however, preferred to call him “Epimanes”, meaning madman.

“Epiphanes” was assumed by other Greek rulers, as well, including Ptolemy V.

He shall act deceitfully... He shall stir up his power: This was fulfilled when Antiochus Epiphanes carried on the feud between the dynasties but pretended friendship and alliance to catch them off guard. Despite massive efforts and epic battles, Antiochus Epiphanes did not stand, and his army was indeed swept away.

Those who eat of the portion of his delicacies shall destroy him: This was fulfilled in the treasonous acts against Antiochus IV by his own counselors.

His heart shall be moved against the holy covenant: This is a wrenching statement. This vile/contemptible person would attack the land, the people, and the temple of God in Israel.

This was fulfilled when Antiochus Epiphanes returned from Egypt, bitter from defeat at the hands of Rome (ships from Kittim - Cyprus) and the Ptolemies. He vented his anger against Jerusalem, which was already shaken because Antiochus sold the office of High Priest and persecuted the Jewish people to conform to Greek culture, forsaking the faith and traditions of their fathers.

Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate: Antiochus Epiphanes set up an image of Zeus at the temple altar. He demanded sacrifice to this image, and later desecrated the temple by sacrificing a pig on it. This is the picture of the “abomination of desolation” Jesus is pointing to in Matthew 24:15. Antiochus IV Epiphanes would not be the last usurper/antichrist.

1 John 2:18:

*Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.*

So even in the first century when John wrote his epistles, “many” antichrists had already come, and the rumor that yet another was on the way should be taken seriously, for as Jesus said, this is a sign of the end of the age.

Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong: When Antiochus Epiphanes turned his anger on Jerusalem, the Jewish people were divided. Some forsook their covenant with

God, and compromised with Greek culture and religion. A faithful remnant, though, knew that God is faithful, and continued to stand for righteousness in the face of terrible persecution.

For many days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering: Antiochus IV is said to have killed 80,000 Jews, taken 40,000 more as prisoners, and sold another 40,000 as slaves. He also plundered the temple, robbing it of nearly everything of any Earthly value, let alone spiritual significance.

Until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time: This reign of terror, like all those that preceded it, had a clock on it; it would only last as long as God had appointed.

### **11:36-45, The Antichrist Pattern as set forth by Antiochus IV Epiphanes**

He shall exalt and magnify himself above every god: Brief though his reign would be, the angel explains to Daniel that this king shall arbitrarily assert his power and authority; exalting himself in the pride of his heart, and elevate himself above every god, making statements and proclamations beyond reasonable comprehension, which would be unexplainable in the case of a normal human being. And he will be successful by all outward appearances until “the indignation be accomplished”, that is, until the wrath of God upon His people would be completed, until His punishment would accomplish its purpose. That’s tough to understand, but what God has determined to happen *will* happen; it cannot be recalled. It *must* happen.

So what should we be on the lookout for, as Jesus warned us to be? In the case of a Ptolemy V or an Antiochus IV Epiphanes it may seem obvious; these were brutal, violent, and merciless men.

Paul in his second letter to the Thessalonians pointed out perhaps the most important points (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4):

*Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.*

Brutal, violent, and merciless men abound, but it is those – violent or not – who set themselves up as a replacement for, or as the sole voice of God, who are truly the antichrist.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes is important for us to learn about because he prefigures the ultimate evil force(s) who oppose God's work. Although it was a statue of Zeus that Epiphanes erected in the temple, it was his declaration directing worship to a false god under threat of punishment in which he set himself up as "Epiphanes" in the worst, most blasphemous sense.

At the time of the end: The angel describes to Daniel a confederation of kings coming against this great leader, with a battle in and near the Holy Land. While many contemporary teachers and commentators point to Arab countries, or Russia, as being prophesied of here coming together at the battle of Armageddon, it reminds me of Revelation 20:7-10:

*And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

"Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him." (v. 45)